

AN ANALYTICAL STUDY ON ROLE OF GHEE IN HEALTHY AGEING

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ABSTRACT

In India population of elderly is increasing, hence gaining tag of greying nation. Management of elderly poses various problems owing to physiological changes and development of many chronic problems. As per *Ayurveda*, ageing is a natural disease characterised with physiological increase of *Vata*, derangement of *Agni*, depletion of *Dhatu* (body tissues), *Ojas* (factor responsible for immunity) and *Bala* (strength) as a result of impaired nutrition. Old age is associated with cognitive impairments, loss of muscles and dryness of skin, wrinkling etc. Proper nourishment is key to prevention of ailments, hence proper dietary management is very important. *Rasayanas* (rejuvenators) in the form of diet, lifestyle and medicine have an important role in healthy ageing. Milk and ghee are best rejuvenating diet to counteract issues related with ageing. This review article specially deals about the role of ghee as *Ajasrika Rasayana* (rejuvenating diet) and how it helps to improve the quality of life in old age by pacifying the symptoms of ageing.

KEYWORDS: *Ajasrika Rasayana, Dhatukshaya, Ojas, Memory, Svabhavika Vyadhi.*

INTRODUCTION

According to Population Census 2011 the population of elderly (aged 60 years or above) in India is approximately 104 million. The elderly population has increased over time from 5.6% in 1961 to 8.6% in 2011.^[1] Hence, India is labelled as 'Ageing nation'^[2] Population of elderly is estimated to reach 324 million by the year 2050. Owing to this, geriatric care is becoming public health priority. Ageing is an inevitable normal physiological process, where the quality of life tends to decline gradually. Elderly become more susceptible for multiple co-morbidities, along with physical and cognitive deficit.

Food plays an important role in prevention and cure of the disease. In *Ayurveda* certain food articles have been indicated for regular consumption for prevention of diseases.^[3] These food articles include *Shashatika Shali* (special type of rice grown in 60 days), *Mudga* (Green gram), *Saindhava* (Rock salt), *Amalaki* (Indian goose berry), *Yava* (Barley), cow's milk, cow's Ghee, *Jangala Mamsa* (meat of terrestrial animals) and honey^[4] Especially cow's ghee should be consumed regularly, as it is the best rejuvenator^[5] and categorised under *Ajasrika Rasayanas* (Dietary rejuvenator)^[6] Ghee is best among unctuous substances (*Sneha dravyas*)^[7] and *Vayasthapana* (stabilizes the ageing process).^[8]

Old age is accompanied by progressive physiological changes in functions of most organs. There is also gradual onset of many chronic conditions such as hypertension, cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, diabetes and dementias with advancing age.^[9] Consequently resulting in decrease in quality of life of an elderly. Nutrition has emerged as a major modifiable determinant of chronic disease and age related decline^[10] Dietary modifications are highly essential for health promotion and also determine predisposition of an individual for diseases like cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes much later in life.^[11]

Old age in ayurveda

It is considered as one of the *Swabhavika vyadhi*^[12] which occurs in due course of time and cannot be avertable. *Acharya Charaka* mentioned *Kala* ie time as prime factor as cause of *Jara*. The symptoms of ageing includes changes occurring in body function in old age from *Vata* aggravation to *Agni* imbalance leading to *Dhatu kshaya*.

Ghee in ayurveda

Acharya Charaka considers Ghee under *Goras Varga* (products of cow)^[13]

Properties of ghee^[14]

Rasa (Taste): *Madhura* (sweet),

Guna (Properties): *Guru* (heavy), *Mrudu* (soft)

Virya (Potency): *Sheeta* (cold)

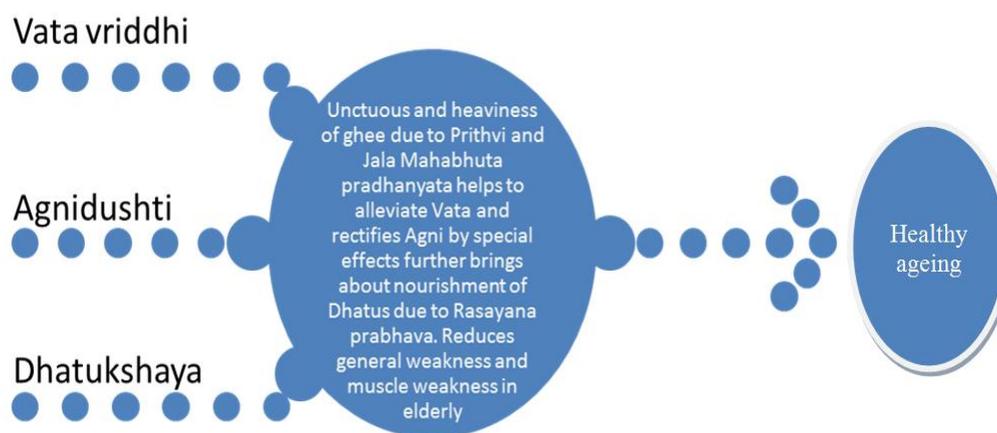
Vipaka (State after digestion): *Madhura* (Sweet)

Prabhava (Special effect): *Medhya* (Good for intellect)

Doshaghna (Dosha pacification): *Vatapittaghna* (Alleviates *Vata* and *Pitta*)

Ghee pacifies *Vata* and *pitta dosha*, beneficial for all *Dhatus* (body tissues) from *rasa* (fluid principles of the body) to *Shukra* (gametes), increases *Ojas* (factor

responsible for immunity), brings softness in body, clarity of voice and improves the complexion by adding glow to skin.^[15] It also increases memory, intellect, *Kapha*, and *meda* (fat)^[16] It is *anabhishyandi* (does not block channels), increases digestive fire, brings lusture to skin, slows down ageing process, beneficial for eyes, heavy and having antimicrobial property.^[17] It acquires more properties, when it is processed with different drugs. Ghee acts as *Rasayana* nootropic, tonic and appetizer.^[18] It is beneficial for Children as well as elderly^[19] as it is best *Vayasthapana dravya* (stabilizes ageing process).^[20]

Effects of ghee elderly**DISCUSSION**

Old age is associated with many physiological and anatomical changes in the body. The diet and lifestyle are vital factors that have a direct impact on health of an elderly. Rejuvenating diet that help in nourishing the body tissues (*Dhatus*) along with *Ojas* (factor responsible for immunity and essence of 7 *dhatus*) should be regularly consumed for healthy ageing. Ghee is best among rejuvenators and regularly consumed diet items. It counteracts most of the ailments caused in elderly. **Vatavriddhi:** The basic factor for many old age issues is physiological aggravation of *Vata*. Ghee pacifies *Vata* by its unctuous (*Snigdha*) and heavy property (*Guru guna*) due to predominance of *Prithvi* (earth) and *Ap* (water) *Mahabhuta* (basic elements). **Agni** (Principle responsible for digestion, assimilation and metabolism): As a result of physiological aggravation of *Vata* due to old age *Agni* becomes *Vishama* (deranged) resulting in problems with digestion, assimilation and metabolism ultimately leading to impairment in nourishment. Ghee enhances *Agni* by *Prabhava* (special effects). Ghee aids digestion and gets digested easily due to the presence of short chain fatty acids.^[21] **Dhatukshaya** (depletion of tissues) and **Ojokshaya** (depletion of factor responsible for immunity) due to impairment in *Agni* and effect of *Vatavriddhi* are rectified by *Dhatuvardhaka* (tissue enhancing) effect of ghee. Further, ghee has *Rasayana* (rejuvenating) effect, thus helps in enhancing *Ojas*. As per scientific researches Ghee is rich in anti-oxidants, which benefit elderly.^[22] This *Rasayana* effect is brought

about in 3 levels i.e. nourishing the *Rasadidhatus* (body tissues) by properties, enhancing *Agni* by special effects and by stimulating secretion of stomach acids to aid digestion. Generally, digestion process is decelerated by fats and oils, as they are heavy by nature, but ghee stimulates digestion by its special effect (*Prabhava*).^[23] **Dryness of skin**, one among the common manifestations of ageing also is taken care by the unctuous nature and *Rasayana* (rejuvenation) property of ghee. **Balavriddhi** (strength promotion) is brought about by *Balya guna* (strength enhancing property) of ghee among elderly.^[24] Ghee provides good amount of energy i.e. 9 K Cal/gm to an individual which energizes an individual.^[25] Ghee provides nutrition and strength and act as energy source for the body. Ghee also enhances strength of sense organs like eyes, nose and ears. Ghee contains carotenoids which are beneficial for eyes.^[26] With the advancing age cognitive impairment sets in leading to many problems. Ghee has *Medhya* property^[27] which is good for intellect, hence helps to overcome cognitive impairments along with deteriorating memory power. Further, ghee has an added advantage, as it can be used to extract active principles from certain herbs while being processed in *Ghrta Kalpana* (one among drug delivery medium). Such medicated ghee can be used ideally in many old age ailments. By the lipophilic action, ghee aids carrying of nutrients or active principles to a target organ and ultimately to the cell, through cell membrane made up of lipid.^[28]

CONCLUSION

Cow's ghee is best among rejuvenators and should be incorporated regularly in diet for counteracting of issues arising due to physiological changes as a result of ageing and various age related chronic health conditions. It is a cost effective, nonpharmacological effective diet intervention. It can be easily applied at the community level, as it is one among the traditional food substances commonly used by majority of people.

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